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Chasing the ride: Justus Peterson's path from the gridiron to the rodeo arena

Justus Peterson didn't grow up dreaming of rodeo.



The Montana Technological University senior spent five years on the Oredigger football team before ever seriously considering stepping into the arena. Somewhere between practices, road trips, and one final year of eligibility, Peterson found something unexpected that changed the trajectory of his life.

"I just started practicing rodeo and fell in love with it," Peterson said. "I really wanted to spend this last year trying to make the college finals."

Now the Dillon native is balancing a full academic load, competing in track and field, and chasing a spot at the College National Finals Rodeo.

Peterson's journey to Montana Tech began with football. Recruited to play quarterback, he later transitioned to free safety, spending five seasons with the program. When granted an additional year of eligibility during the COVID era, he used it not for football, but to pursue something new.

That "something new" quickly became a full commitment. "I hadn't rodeoed at all yet," he said. "And then just two years ago, I was like, I need to do it."

Today, Peterson competes in steer wrestling, one of rodeo's most physically demanding events, requiring athletes to leap from a horse onto a running steer and wrestle it to the ground. It came with a steep learning curve.

"When I started, I was very scared," Peterson said. "You've got to get over that hump when you see that a 600-pound steer with these big horns and you've got to jump off one live animal onto another live animal. You can get hurt."

But that edge, the risk, the adrenaline, the competition, is exactly what drew him in.

"It's that thrill, that level of competition that you're missing when you're done with other sports," he said.

Unlike many of his competitors, Peterson doesn't have the backing of a formal collegiate rodeo program. Montana Tech has one other student, Kellen Colliflower, who competes, leaving Peterson to navigate the sport largely on his own. Peterson's built connections across the region, often training and traveling with students from the University of Montana Western, just down the road from his hometown.

"I get along very well with the Western kid. They come out to our place and practice," Peterson said. "I even travel with them to most of the college rodeos."

Peterson reflected on the hardest part of the process.

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"The hardest part about being here at Montana Tech has been the transition from a team sport to an individual one," Peterson said. "In football, I was surrounded by a large group of guys that I considered my brothers every day for 5 years with team lifts, structured schedules, and always having teammates in the locker room pushing and motivating each other. Now, being in an individual sport, everything is much more self-driven. My time is scheduled by myself, and when I'm in the weight room, I don't have 60 guys around me yelling, competing, and pushing me to be better. It's taught me that I have to create that same intensity and motivation on my own, which has been the biggest adjustment."

The independent path hasn't slowed him down. Peterson currently sits third in the Big Sky Region standings in steer wrestling, putting him within reach of qualifying for the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming.

To get there, he'll need to finish among the top three competitors in the region, a goal that will be decided over a series of high-stakes rodeos this spring, including major events at Montana State University and the University of Montana.

Peterson spent the past year developing and competing on a standout 20-year-old horse named Tabasco, who helped him win an amateur finals title before being sidelined with arthritis. More recently, he's been testing new horses on the road, hauling them to competitions across Texas, Oklahoma, and Arizona.

"It's like trying to pick the starting quarterback," he said. "You've got to see how they react in pressure."

Peterson's training and travel schedule would be daunting for most students.

In addition to rodeo, he competes hurdles in track and field and is completing multiple degrees through Highlands College and Montana Tech. When he graduates, he'll have completed programs in carpentry, welding, metal fabrication, and machining.



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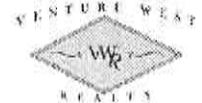
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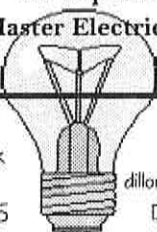
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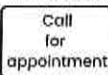
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"It's a juggling act," he said. "But it's really, truly fun. What else are you going to do? Sit on your phone or something?"

His professors and coaches have played a key role in making that balance possible. Track head coach Chuck Merrifield, in particular, has supported Peterson's rodeo ambitions, encouraging him to compete whenever possible.

"He's been so supportive," Peterson said. "I've just been so lucky to have a track coach like that in my corner."

Peterson said his parents, Jenny and Jesse, have also had a huge influence on his journey.

"My dad was a two-time college national champion steer wrestler and also a professional national circuit champion steer wrestler," Peterson said. "My mom was a Hall of Fame volleyball player and coach at Montana Western, and she's also the daughter of the 1961 world all-around champion cowboy, Benny Reynolds."

I truly have a lot to thank them for when it comes to my drive in athletics, and the mentorship I get from my dad has been outstanding. I definitely wouldn't be anywhere close to where I am today without my parents."

Looking ahead, Peterson plans to continue chasing rodeo professionally after graduation, splitting his time between Montana summers and the winter rodeo circuit in the southern U.S.

"I want to chase this dream as long as I'm still young and healthy," he said.

Despite opportunities to transfer to schools with established rodeo programs, Peterson chose to stay at Montana Tech—a decision rooted in both loyalty and experience.

"There's been plenty of opportunities, but I just love Montana Tech so much and love the city of Butte that I'd like to finish where I started," he said.

He also sees potential for something bigger: a future where Montana Tech builds its own rodeo program.

"I think it would be phenomenal," Peterson said. "Maybe 15, 20 years down the future, Montana Tech is a powerhouse in the Big Sky Region."

For now, Peterson is focused on the road ahead, one rodeo at a time, one steer at a time, chasing a goal that didn't exist for him just a few years ago.

"You only get so many years in college," he said. "You should be busy, and it's all been really fun."

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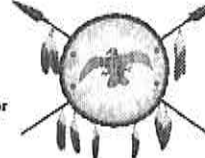
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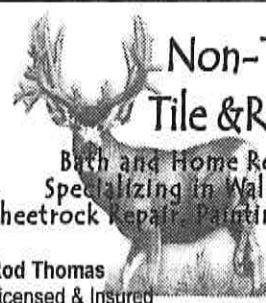
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Over the next two months Northwestern Energy will be replacing power poles on the Beaverhead Trails Coalition's High Trails property. This work is being done as part of Northwestern Energy's Avian Protection Plan to reduce bird injuries and mortalities due to powerline collisions and electrocutions. Please be aware that there will be work vehicles, including heavy equipment on the trail system during this time.

BTC may need to close some trails temporarily to reduce user/equipment interaction. Please be aware of signage and respect these closures during this time. Tim's Ridge and the M Trail will be impacted. There will be one day of full trail system closure while new poles are flown in and placed by helicopter. At this time, the anticipated date is April 28, 2026, weather dependent.

If you have questions, please reach out to beaverheadtrails@gmail.com. For more information on Beaverhead Trails Coalition or to donate and support the trails, please visit our website- www.beaverheadtrails.org

Public Service Announcement – Street Preparation Work

The City of Dillon is preparing for a Street Preservation Project scheduled for mid-June. In advance of this work, crews will begin crack sealing, weed spraying, and durapatching during April and May.

To help ensure this work can be completed efficiently, we are asking residents to avoid on-street parking during the following times:

- Washington Street (Atlantic St. to Poindexter St.)
Wednesdays | 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Pacific Street (Atlantic St. to Chapman St.)
Thursdays | 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Temporary parking restrictions will allow crews full access to complete necessary maintenance ahead of the preservation project.

We appreciate your cooperation and support in helping improve our city streets. If you have questions, please contact City Hall.

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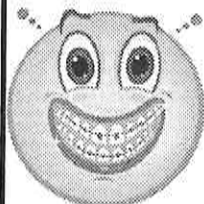
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'Together: Grief Group a free monthly gathering for anyone who has experienced the loss of someone close to them. Participants share a meal provided by Honeybee Hospice while discussing the needs that arise from grief, exploring avenues for healing, and building a supportive community. The group meets on the first Thursday of each month from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Vibrant Lives / St. James Episcopal Church Guild Hall, 203 E Glendale St, Dillon. For more information, contact Elaine Spicer at (406) 925-3961.

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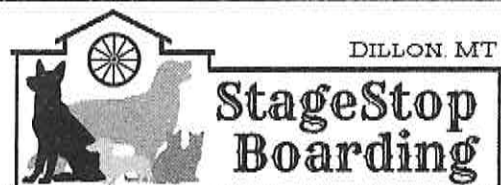


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Late Rally Falls Short as Lady Beavers Drop High-Scoring Game to Ennis

Jeremy Crawford, Southwestern Montana News

A late push by the Beaverhead County Varsity Lady Beavers wasn't enough Tuesday as they fell 18-15 to the Ennis Varsity Mustangs in a high-scoring showdown.

Despite pounding out 11 hits, the Lady Beavers couldn't overcome an early surge by Ennis, which finished with nine hits but capitalized on key opportunities and Beaverhead miscues.

TyMBER Barnes led the Lady Beavers at the plate, collecting three hits in five at-bats, including a two-run home run to left field in the fifth inning. She also added singles in the third and fourth innings.

Ennis broke the game open in the bottom of the second inning, scoring nine runs on a string of hits, walks, and a hit batter. RBI singles from Hannah Hale, Adi Wood, Ruby Boggus, and Addi Rowe highlighted the inning, along with a bases-loaded walk and an error that brought in two more runs.

The Mustangs extended their lead in the third inning with help from a walk, an error, and a double by Rowe.

Beaverhead County responded in the fourth inning, plating five runs on four hits. Mya Creighton and Kaitlyn Konen each delivered RBI singles, while an Ennis error brought in two runs and Lilla Guiberson added an RBI double.

Barnes continued to fuel the comeback in the fifth inning with her two-run homer, cutting into the deficit.

The Lady Beavers made things interesting in the sixth, scoring four more runs. Konen launched a solo home run to left, Grace King tripled in two runs, and a passed ball added another, pulling Beaverhead within three runs at 18-15.

However, the comeback effort stalled there as Ennis held on for the win.

Adi Wood earned the victory for Ennis, allowing 15 runs—seven earned—on 11 hits over seven innings, while striking out four and walking two. Mya Creighton took the loss for Beaverhead County, pitching four and one-third innings and giving up 12 runs, five earned, on six hits. Barnes started in the circle, allowing six runs over one and two-thirds innings.

Konen and Barnes each recorded three hits for the Lady Beavers, with Konen driving in a team-high three runs. Creighton added two hits in the loss.

For Ennis, Rowe and Wood each collected three hits, while five Mustangs—Rowe, Wood, Hale, Boggus, and Kahryn Vaudrin—drove in two runs apiece. Ennis also drew five walks, with Katie Barney and Cassidy Hess each earning two free passes.

The Lady Beavers will look to bounce back Thursday when they return home to face Park.



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MONTANA FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MARCH 31, 2026
COURT REPORT

NAME	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
Dylan Hamilton Change of Plea	Drug Possession Drug Paraphernalia	Plea None Bond Posted Continuance
Anthony Fury Change of Plea Sentencing	Drug Possession	Plea Guilty Bond Released Suspended Sentence Treatment Program Transferred to Butte Prior Sentence Fine No Fee Yes
Amanda Chapnick Sentencing	DUI Driving Violations	Plea Guilty Bond Released Suspended Sentence Treatment Program
Randy Szerence Initial Appearance	Obstruction False Police Report	Plea Not Guilty Bond Posted Trail Pending

Montana Western Athletic Director candidate
presentations

Community members are invited to attend the upcoming Montana Western Athletic Director candidate presentations outlining their vision for Montana Western Athletics and the role of strategic fundraising in supporting athletic success.
 Forum Schedule

Thursday, April 2 | 3:30-4:15 p.m.
 Lewis & Clark Room, Mathews Hall
 Candidate: Cole Bauer
 Friday, April 3 | 3:30-4:15 p.m.
 Lewis & Clark Room, Mathews Hall
 Candidate: Jason Ferris

For questions or additional details regarding this search,
 please contact Riley Martello at 406 683 7345.

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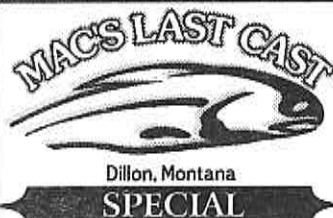
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Sheriff's Office Seizes Suspected Narcotics After Traffic Stop Near Dillon

Jeremy Crawford, Southwestern Montana News

A traffic stop on Interstate 15 last week led to the arrest of two individuals and the seizure of multiple suspected illegal narcotics, according to the Beaverhead County Sheriff's Office.

On March 28, 2026, deputies with the Sheriff's Office Criminal Interdiction Team initiated a stop after observing a vehicle with a malfunctioning taillight. The vehicle exited the interstate and was pulled over near the intersection of Atlantic Street and Southside Boulevard.

During the stop, deputies reported observing behavior consistent with criminal activity, prompting further investigation.

K9 Riker, handled by Deputy Dairy, was deployed at the scene and alerted to the presence of illegal narcotics within the vehicle. Deputies then detained both occupants and obtained a search warrant.

According to the Sheriff's Office, one of the individuals initially provided false identification but was later positively identified using law enforcement databases.

A search of the vehicle led to the discovery of multiple items of drug paraphernalia and suspected controlled substances, including heroin, methamphetamine, fentanyl, and marijuana. Additional suspected narcotics were reportedly recovered during the booking process at the Beaverhead County Detention Center.

Both individuals were taken into custody and transported to the Beaverhead County Detention Center, where they face multiple charges, including possession of dangerous drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, and obstruction.

Authorities noted that all suspected substances have been submitted to the Montana State Crime Lab for testing, and charges may be amended pending the results.

The Beaverhead County Sheriff's Office also issued a public safety reminder regarding fentanyl, noting that even small amounts of the drug can be deadly. Officials urge the public to avoid handling unknown substances and to report suspected drug activity to law enforcement.

The Sheriff's Office said it will continue proactive criminal interdiction efforts aimed at keeping dangerous drugs out of the community.

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3/29 Palm Sunday Service 10:30
4/2 Maundy Thursday Communion Service - 6:30 p.m.
4/3 Good Friday Tenebrae Service - 6:30 p.m.
4/5 Easter Sunday Communion Service - 10:30 a.m.
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April 3rd, Good Friday Mass: 3 PM
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Easter Sunday Mass: 9 AM
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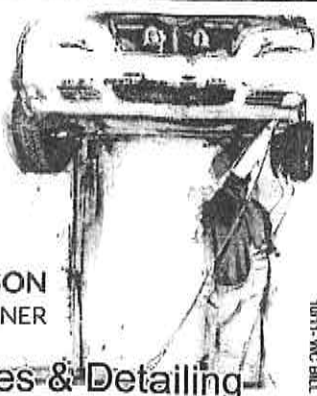
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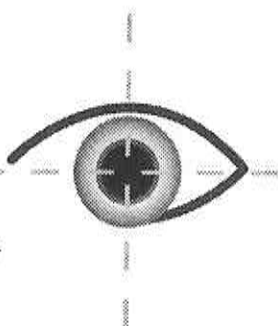
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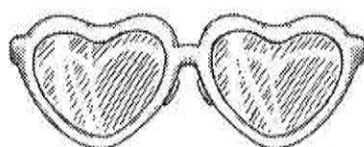
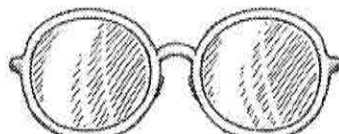
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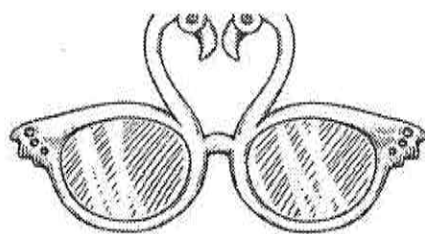
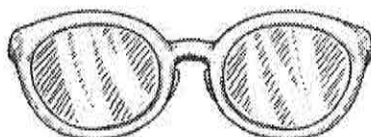
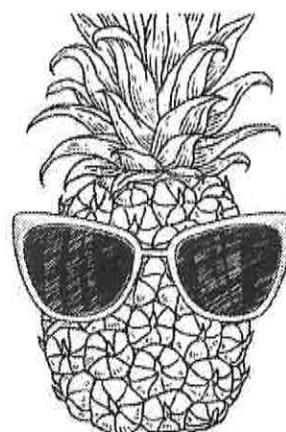
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Doors Open: 5:00 PM | Dinner: 7:00 PM

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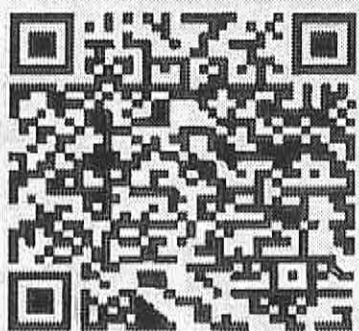
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To schedule an appointment call: 406.683.4564 or 406.683.3696



GOOD FRIDAY

Community Service

**4/3
2026**

Our Savior's
Lutheran Church
715 E Bannack St

6:30PM



Come enjoy a short service with scripture readings accompanied by slowly dimming candles as we reflect on the Cross.

Hosted by pastors of Our Savior's Lutheran, Dillon Vineyard, First Presbyterian, and WayPoint Churches.

HE HAS **RISEN**

EASTER SERVICES AT DILLON VINEYARD

SUNDAY APRIL 5TH

9:00 & 10:30AM

FREE BREAKFAST 10AM

**live worship, uplifting message, kids
worship & activities, baptisms (2nd service)**



*Dillon Vineyard Church
310 E Center Street
www.DillonVineyard.org*

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- Nail trims
- Ear cleaning
- Sanitary trims
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4/11- WC BILL



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BK Glass

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59743

3/4-6/3 PD

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2/17-8/16PD

Lazy P Garage, LLC



Joe Panziera
406.596.5098

Nick Panziera
406.596.1803

Brakes, Oil Changes,
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Call for an appointment
205 Bluebird Drive, Dillon, MT

3/13-6/12 PD

ST JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH HOLY WEEK SERVICES

30 March (Monday) 5 pm Compline

31 March (Tuesday) 5 pm Compline

1 April (Wednesday) Noon Stations

of the Cross

2 April (Thursday) 5 pm Compline

3 April Good Friday 4 pm Holy

Eucharist

5 April Easter Sunday 10 am

Morning Prayer

Mountain Time Builders LLC

Pole Barns and Garages

3192 MT Hwy 287

Sheridan, MT 59749

Abraham Lee 406.608.0985

2/23- WC BILL

RAPID ELECTRIC & CONSTRUCTION

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MORRISON HEATING & COOLING

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ELECTRIC, HVACR NEEDS.

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1/8- WC BILL

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- Hardwood floors/high ceilings
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3/6-WC/BILL



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2/23-4/10 BILL

Accounting Services Inc.
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**Now Accepting New Tax
and Payroll Clients**

312 South Pacific Street | Dillon, MT 59725
406-683-4254

Please Call or Stop By Our Office

3/3-4/2 BILL



Meet
Sunny Harmon

THE CABINET STOP
CABINETS & COUNTER TOPS

Locally owned and operated.
Serving SW Montana.
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No job too big or small!



For more information call
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Jordan Harmon at: 406-925-0615
Gary Caprara at: 406-580-1974

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McKINNEY**

County Commissioner • District 1

**HONEST LEADERSHIP.
REAL INTEGRITY.**

Meet the candidate. Ask questions.
Be heard.

DILLON — Mac's Last Cast
April 9 • 6-8 PM

WISDOM — Antler Saloon
April 17 • 6-8 PM

LIMA — Peat Steakhouse
April 23 • 6-8 PM

POLARIS — Grasshopper Inn
April 30 • 6-8 PM

DILLON — CK Fringe Salon & Spa
May 5 • 6-8 PM

Your voice matters. I'm here to listen.

(406) 596-5590

Paid for by McKinney for Commissioner

**Dillon Jaycees
Annual Easter**

Egg Hunt
Saturday, April 4th

at 10:00 am

SHARP

Vigilante Park

For kids of all ages

Thank you to all of our
sponsors we couldn't make
this happen without you!

3/23-4/3 BILL

SPRING SALE!

- 2024 Toro TimeCutter 45" Zero Turn -Well maintained 93 hours. \$3800
- 2024 5x8 Tilted Open Cargo Trailer— Like new. \$850 (zero turn/Trailer—Total Pkg \$4500)
- HD 6cu Husky gently used wheelbarrow. \$75
- EGO- 16" Cordless Chain Saw—Used once Great Power Paid \$280 - Now \$175

Contact: Mobile (406)210-4790

4/24 PD

STUMP HUNTER

**STUMP REMOVAL & TREE REMOVAL
WE BAG ANY SIZE**

BIG OR SMALL STUMPS & Trees

Hedge Removal

Serving Dillon for over 16 years

SERVING 60 MILE RADIUS

SCOTT RAKICH

Home 683-6283 Cell 925-0904

Licensed & Insured



3/23-9/22

Grace United Methodist Church
Mandu Service

April 2, 2026 5:30 pm

A light Supper will be served with communion

Easter Sunday

10 am Service

April 5th, 2026

Pastor Sue McNicol

3/30-4/3 PD

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3/31-4/6 BILL

CDL DRIVERS & SKILLED LABORERS WANTED -- Dillon

R. E. Miller & Sons seeking **Class A CDL drivers** and **experienced construction laborers** for heavy civil work. Must be dependable, have a good driving record (CDL), and pass a drug test. **Benefits included. Equipment operators are not being hired at this time.**

Call 406-683-2175 or email kwise@remillerandsons.com



St. James Episcopal Church

203 East Glendale
Dillon, Montana
406.683.2735

stjamesdillon@live.com

Services 10 am

2nd & 4th Sundays, Eucharist
1st & 3rd Sunday, Morning Prayer

12/30- WC BILL TH



SUNDAY WORSHIP

JOIN US IN PERSON
In our Sanctuary | 10 am

OR FROM AFAR
via Facebook Live | 10am

24 SOUTH PACIFIC ST
406.683.2655 | www.fpcdillon.org

12/5- WC TH/F

Ferrat Ranch Limousin

Offering 18 month old registered, purebred Limousin bulls by private treaty through the end of April. Athletic, pasture/forage raised, fall born. Fertility & DNA tested. Fully guaranteed and ready for deliver. Catalog available upon request.



WHERE WE ❤️ OUR LIMOUSIN

John (406) 949-7911 or Samantha (406) 949-0869
ferratranch@gmail.com

4/1-14 BILL

Classified Cont.

NOW HIRING 3/31-4/6 BILL

Mae Shuttle Services is hiring shuttle drivers. A valid driver's license is required; no experience necessary. This is a seasonal position with flexible hours, competitive pay and a fun work environment. Located in Great Divide, call or text (406)219-6525 to apply!



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1/16- WC BILL



3/25-4/24 BILL

Offering Spring turn Ons, maintenance and repairs, winter blowouts and some landscaping needs!

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Call or Text Amanda at 406-231-5180

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massage needs
for 14 years!

Call today to experience
a massage by Emily

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3/27-4/26 PD

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3/14- WC BILL

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41 years and growing

Thank you Dillon for your support.

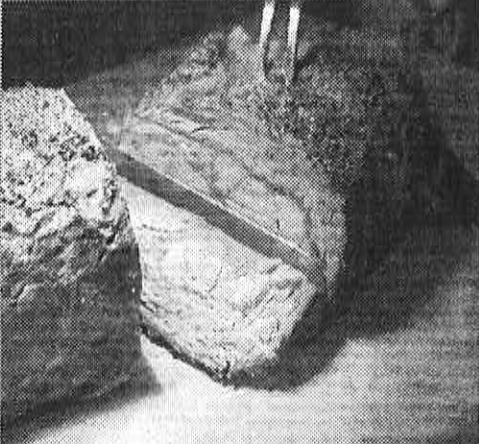
Opening for the Season April 1st, 2026
Annals, perennials, house plants & more

3/6-6/5 BILL

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Blacktail Station / Mac's Last East



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Featuring Prime Rib & Carving Station

SALADS & SIDES
Fresh Salads • Fruit • Rolls & Butter

FEATURED SELECTIONS
Ribs • Homemade Lasagna • Shrimp • Mac & Cheese • Mashed Potatoes

CARVING STATION
Prime Rib • Leg of Lamb • Turkey • Ham

DESSERT TABLE
Chocolate Layer Cake • Tiramisu • Cheesecake

RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED
406-683-2444

Adults \$36.95
Kids 5 - 12 \$19.95 • 4 & Under Free

SUNDAY, APRIL 6
11:00 AM - 2:30 PM
LAST SEATING 2:30 PM

326-330-43



ALMONTY

GENTUNG MONTANA CORP

Almonty Gentung Montana Corp is hiring an Operator/Laborer

We are seeking dynamic and skilled people to work at our Glen Mill Site operations. Reporting to the Metallurgist/Processing Manager, this role is an operator/laborer role that ensures that the plant operates safely and efficiently, while also concentrating on an excellent standard of housekeeping and a continuous flow of Mill operations. You will receive internal and external training to ensure you can complete your job to a high standard. Experience in machinery and truck operations advantageous but we are willing to teach the right candidates with the right attitude. Pay DOE and benefits. Please email resumes to admin.montana@almonty.com.

3/30-4/10 BILL



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JOB VACANCY:
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Qualified in

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 - Track inventory movement
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